

The Annual Plan

Why Plan?

A common question, (and one with hundreds of answers). Put simply a plan can help inspire the commitment of you and our athletes, it helps you prioritise & execute what is important & when it is important and it allows you to review what worked & what didn't when you look back over a campaign. Planning allows you to be **proactive** rather than **reactive** and therefore has a greater influence over the performance outcomes of your athlete(s).

How Accurate Does It Need to Be?

The Annual Plan can be likened to a recipe – there are certain basic ingredients that go into the recipe but each chef puts his or her signature on the final product by altering the quality and quantity of ingredients and using their own items. Similarly coaches have their own “trademarks” for their annual plans but there is no one, right “recipe”. Coaches can plan a broad outline of the year but the detail should be flexible because no one knows:

1. How athletes will adapt to training (that is what testing and/or preliminary competitions are for)
2. How to cope with adjustments due to injuries (where training may be limited or competitions are missed)
3. Unexpected incidents that may crop up (change in competition dates at short notice)

The Key Areas:

In designing an Annual Plan there are 3 key steps to consider:

1. **Outcomes/Goals:** What are you aiming for? (Competition results, times, distances etc.)
2. **Critical Performance Areas/Processes:** How will you get there? (Training camps, services, life balance etc.)
3. **Monitoring/Evaluation:** How will you know you are on track? (Testing, performance appraisals etc.)

NOTE: This resource could be used in conjunction with “Strategic Planning”, “Steps to Writing a Periodised Plan” and “Integrated Science/Medicine Plan” Resources

Driving the Annual Plan

Coaches drive the Annual Plan by:

- Designing a Competition Programme – sometimes this is out of the coach’s control (e.g. the Olympics are a set date) but often coaches need to make decisions on what supplementary competitions are required
- Developing a Training Plan – a key role for the coach! What emphasis in training does each athlete need in order to perform? What training loads can each athlete handle? What training needs prioritisation? When does the athlete need a break away from the sport?
- Integrating Support Services – what are the services needed and who is going to deliver them? Do the support services reflect the emphases in the Training Plan? How do these services balance with the sport training?

Pitfalls in Planning

- Planning is only as good as the information on which it is based
- Planning isn’t magic; you can’t always get what you want
- Prepare to be adaptable
- Put planning in it’s place and time
- Planning can become a substitute for action
- You can be blindsided by the issues that planning reveals
- Beware the “model” approach (i.e. use of a menu)

Research has shown that expert coaches plan differently than novices and spend considerably more time (up to 60%) in planning.

While this resource has been developed for an Annual Plan the actual principles of the plan can be applied to a shorter or longer duration.

For more information:

- An Integrated Approach to Planning. In: *Better Coaching. Advanced Coach’s Manual 2nd edition*, Pyke, F. (Ed) 2001, Australian Sports Commission, pp. 211 – 224.
- http://www.ausport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/205815/Planning_in_Sport.pdf